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Chair

The Honourable Robert Nault

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● (1535)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.)): Colleagues, I'd like to convene this meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. This is to deal with the main estimates.

I will go through this process for you one more time, because at the end of this meeting we'll move some motions to go through the different votes. The main estimates for 2018-19 are votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, and L25 under Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development; vote 1 under International Development Research Centre; and vote 1 under International Joint Commission (Canadian Section).

Before us today to speak to the estimates and to make a presentation is Minister Bibeau.

Minister Bibeau has been a regular at our committee, and we very much appreciate that. As always, colleagues, we'll let the minister make some opening comments, and then we'll get right into questions, which will run for an hour. Then we'll turn it over to officials after that.

Welcome, Minister. The floor is yours.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, I am here today to present you the Main Estimates.

I am accompanied by Mr. Arun Thangaraj, the Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer. Our Deputy Minister, Diane Jacovella, should be joining us any minute now.

When I was appointed Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, the Prime Minister gave me the mandate of refocusing international assistance on the poorest and most vulnerable people, and on the fragile states.

I was also tasked with holding consultations with Canadian stakeholders from international organizations dedicated to international and humanitarian assistance. The aim of these consultations was to create a new framework for policy and funding, to guide the government's decisions on the assistance it provides, to promote community empowerment, and to support strong, lasting growth in developing countries.

I am very proud of Canada's feminist international assistance policy, which was launched last June after one year of consultations. The policy aims to eradicate poverty and to build a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world. It has been proven that promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls are the most efficient ways of reaching this objective.

The fifth sustainable development objective is promoting gender equality and empowering all women and girls. It is at the heart of Canada's approach in implementing the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Gender equality will lead to progress with all the other objectives.

To this end, Canada is taking action.

[*English*]

Since Canada's feminist international assistance policy was launched last June, the Government of Canada has committed to a three-year, $650-million investment to scale up the number of women, adults and girls, who have access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services. This will help make contraception available to 120 million women and adolescent girls. This funding also supports organizations that help to prevent gender-based violence and harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage and female genital mutilation—cutting.

We also announced $150 million to strengthen women's rights organizations and movements through the women's voice and leadership program. We want to reach the poorest and most marginalized women, and reach more women at the grassroots level. This will help ensure that more women take part in leadership and decision-making. In some cases, women are putting themselves in danger by speaking up. Canada must support the efforts of these women and girls, and give women the platforms, tools, and protection they need to make their voices heard.

Beyond these efforts, we will also increase the number of girls who complete elementary and high school. How? First, last February, I announced funding of $180 million over three years for the Global Partnership for Education. We want to improve the ability of women-owned businesses and farmers to be part of the value chain. We also want to enhance women's land, labour, inheritance, and property rights.

We will also support initiatives that bolster resilience to climate change and increase the number of people working in green technologies and climate smart agriculture, increase the ability of women to hold leadership positions in public life, and transform Canada's humanitarian assistance to a more gender responsive way.

[*Translation*]

I share your concerns and those of Canadians for the situation faced by many people in Africa, the Caribbean, South America, the Middle East and Asia. Let's take the Rohingya, for example.

The humanitarian situation faced by the Rohingya in Myanmar is absolutely horrible, and catastrophic from a security perspective. Canada was one of the first countries to respond to this humanitarian crisis. Since the start of 2017, Canada has given $45.9 million in humanitarian assistance to address the needs of those affected by the crisis. Last May, we also launched a multi-year strategy, which includes a contribution of $300 million over three years to address humanitarian needs and to promote stability and development in the region, in a timely and coordinated manner.

Making our humanitarian assistance more gender-aware is one of the goals of our policy, which has been concretely implemented in Bangladesh and Myanmar.

[*English*]

For example, when I visited last November, there were only two specialized centres to help survivors of sexual abuse. We decided to support the provision of information services in 20 more. Our actions helped to mobilize additional support within the international community. Today there are a total of 39 safe spaces for women in Cox's Bazar.

[*Translation*]

I would now like to return to the international assistance envelope, which supports the whole-of-government approach to delivering humanitarian assistance.

Sixteen departments and federal agencies are collaborating to achieve the international assistance priorities. The 2018-2019 Main Estimates include funding of $3.9 billion for development, peace and security programs: an increase of $80 million to facilitate quick responses to unforeseen global crises, an increase of $108 million for the 2015-2020 strategy for maternal, newborn and child health, and an increase of $36.7 million for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

● (1540)

[*English*]

I'm pleased to report that budget 2018 provides additional funding to support the implementation of the feminist international assistance policy, including an additional $2 billion over five years, starting in 2018-19, to strengthen the impact of Canada's feminist international assistance policy and advance our international leadership in key areas, and $1.5 billion in funding over five years, starting in 2018-19, in support of innovation in Canada's international assistance.

Recognizing that government donors cannot meet the needs of the sustainable development goals, or SDGs, alone, our government will continue to explore new partnerships and innovative approaches that will mobilize private capital for sustainable development.

To conclude, through Canada's feminist international assistance policy and the significant investments announced in budget 2018, Canada is better positioned to both help the poorest and most vulnerable and contribute to building a more peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous world.

Mr. Chair and colleagues, thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bibeau.

[*English*]

We'll start with Mr. Ziad Aboultaif, please.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Minister, welcome to the committee. I had the pleasure of travelling with you to Africa a couple of months ago. Thanks for that whole trip.

First, a large number of your planned results in the departmental plan have not established targets. Somehow this is left blank under the guise of obtaining baseline information. I find it difficult that with all these incredibly talented civil servants, you are not able to make an educated approximation on some of these baselines.

For example, on the percentage of targeted organizations that advocate for the rights of women, children, marginalized groups, or at-risk populations, the whole area was left blank. Does your department really know how many are being targeted and how many you expect to succeed?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I just want to be sure I understand your question correctly. You're talking about the results and the indicators we have set, or what we expect from the feminist international assistance policy, and you gave one specific example. Is that...?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: There is a specific area left blank in the departmental planning report, which is the percentage of targeted organizations that advocate for the rights of women, children, marginalized groups, or at-risk populations. That whole area is left blank, and I'm puzzled. I believe that you have talented resources at the ministry to at least be able to give us some kind of estimation on that. Can you explain why and, if you know the answer, how many of these targets are expected to succeed?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Maybe I can introduce it, and Arun will be more specific.

We have developed a results framework attached to the feminist international assistance policy with different outcomes and outputs. Some are focusing on the intervention we are making, and others are at a higher level, because we know that we are not the only one to intervene in a country.

I have to agree that we are still looking for some baselines. When we were not measuring certain specific areas, our action.... It was not measured by the department before, because it was not something of interest before. We have mandated a group to study and clarify some the baselines for all of our feminist international assistance policy results framework.

I believe Arun has something more specific to say.

Mr. Arun Thangaraj (Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Planning, Finance and Information Technology, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): You answered the question better than I could.

The departmental plan is based on the new departmental results framework. In setting up the departmental results framework, we went to each result area. One of the areas we were targeting is enhancing the empowerment and rights of women and girls. As soon as we'd do that, we'd say, now how best do we measure that?

We established a performance target, as you said, of what are the organizations we target through our programming that represent and advocate for that. Right now there is no indicator. We don't have the data. As part of setting that indicator up, we've set the data sources, our financial system, as well as our project management reporting tool, where we can capture that.

What we are doing now is trying to find what the baseline indicator is for that specific performance indicator. Once we get the baseline, we can set the target.

● (1545)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: How can you walk through this area without having at least some benchmarks to measure? As I said earlier, you have those talented individuals and resources in the ministry who should be able to tell you.... I don't know how you walk into this without at least clarification, or a clear path as to how you're going to move forward.

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: In establishing the indicator, the first thing we do is ask what becomes meaningful to measure against this target. As you stated, the percentage of organizations we target that do this is a meaningful indicator. But this is a very new area for us in terms of targeting organizations specifically to enhance the empowerment of women and girls.

What we had to do is look at our data sources to see how we captured that information, first of all, to establish the benchmark before we do the target. A lot of it is the underlying data work behind the indicator. It was a rigorous process in getting to the indicator. We do know that we can capture the data, but we don't have what the benchmark ought to be, and therefore the target.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: That's what leads me to be concerned.

To be honest with you, it seems like....

Before I say that, I think there were initiatives before, a Muskoka initiative, for example, in terms of newborn, women, and mothers, that established some base. I don't think you've done much different since then, except for changing the labelling of the whole thing.

I hope that this is not a political calculation of any kind, because after two and a half, almost three, years, we're expecting those measures to be in place and we expect some results. Taxpayers need to see, and we need to know, where we're going with this policy that the government has been talking about for the last two and a half or three years.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: It's impossible to have baselines when we are starting on something brand new. It was clearly not a priority for the previous government to work on women's rights and all these things, and working with local women organizations in the field.

We have taken the time to work with our partners—Canadian, international, and local—to develop this feminist policy. We have worked very hard on our results framework. This results framework is well aligned with the SDGs as well. Yes, we are still missing some baselines, because it is not the way the department used to work. We are in the process of getting those. These remain our priority.

The Chair: We'll now go to Mr. Wrzesnewskyj, please.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Minister, Canada and Ukraine have a very strong bilateral relationship, and we've been among the most steadfast international supporters of Ukraine's democratic and economic reform processes. Since Russia's military invasions of Ukrainian territory in 2014, Canada has contributed $240 million in development assistance and $400 million in low interest loans. Much of Canada's aid intended to bring relief to eastern Ukraine—that's where it's mostly directed—towards the 1.8 million internally displaced, 3.5 million dependent upon aid, and 250,000 children living in an active war zone, one of the regions of the planet with the most land mines.

These are astoundingly large numbers. There are 250,000 children living in an active war zone in Europe. Let me humanize it. Last week, Daria Kazemirova, a 15-year-old girl, did a series of social media posts and soon afterwards she was hit by a Russian artillery shell and was killed. Last year, I welcomed on the Hill Mykola Nyzhnykovskyi, an 11-year-old boy who the Montreal - Shriners Hospitals for Children brought to fit with prosthetics because he lost both legs and an arm—and he lost his brother when they picked up a grenade just outside of their town. That's the real human cost, and the numbers are astounding.

Canada must continue to help the people of Ukraine. Canadians have called upon the Government of Canada to commit to maintaining the funding for international development assistance to Ukraine at the present level of $50 million per year and increasing funding when necessary.

Could you please provide us with an update how the government will meet this particular goal?

● (1550)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Yes, thank you, and I know that you are a strong supporter for the Ukrainian community, and I appreciate it.

Yes, you're right. We are amongst the strongest international supporters of Ukraine, and we intend to continue to be, to implement the democratic and economic reforms.

We are in the process after the policy of looking at all the countries where we are and the vision for each of these countries. I can reassure you that Ukraine remains on the top of the list, and we will keep strongly supporting the country and their reforms.

We are just about to launch a call for proposals. There will be different possibilities for the organizations, international and Canadian, to provide proposals as long as they're really well aligned with a feminist policy, and mainly the good governance, gender equality, and all of these priorities.

Actually, I intend to visit Ukraine next month. This is also to show you that we stay strongly committed to this country, and we will continue in terms of development and assisting the government as well as providing humanitarian assistance for those you were talking about.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you, Minister, and thank you for that support. I wish you a very informative visit to Ukraine. I hope that you might visit the federal police force. Canada, after the revolution of dignity, was a country that took on rebuilding Ukraine's federal police force, which had been the least respected institution of government in Ukraine and was completely disbanded. It was our officers, women from Canada, from the RCMP, and from Montreal's police force who went to Ukraine and rebuilt the police force. Now it is one of the most respected institutions in the country. Approximately 30% of the police force are women.

Minister, I'd like to move on to another question. Our country has been internationally lauded for introducing Canada's feminist international assistance policy. This committee has begun a study on the situation in three African countries that have been affected by long-term violent conflict: Somalia, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In all three countries, women suffered disproportionately, and many continue to be victimized to this day. Within these countries there is a window of opportunity for Canada to make a difference in peace building and stabilization in support of UN resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

What is Canada doing to apply the feminist international assistance policy to help women affected by war and civil conflict in Somalia, South Sudan, and the DRC?

The Chair: Could you answer that question in about a minute?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: In the short version of it, I visited South Sudan and DRC, and I witnessed the very difficult situation for women, especially when we talk about gender-based violence.

As a concrete example in South Sudan, Canada has been instrumental in bringing women into discussions of peace and security and the formal peace process through targeted campaigns and social and traditional media and in focus events.

I'll make it short.

[*Translation*]

Canada's activities in the Democratic Republic of Congo are mostly centred on the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. It's more or less the same thing in Somalia.

We're also leading some interesting initiatives in South Sudan.

[*English*]

Canada also supports Journalists for Human Rights to strengthen the capacity of the media for gender-sensitive reporting in South Sudan.

I would like to speak more about it at another time.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

It's your turn, Ms. Laverdière.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, thank you for being here with us today.

The percentage of Canada's GDP allocated to international development has reached a historic low. Canada isn't even fulfilling one third of its international commitments. It compares rather poorly to countries such as Norway, which is also seeking a seat on the Security Council for the same year as Canada. Norway spends 1.1% of its GDP on international development.

Do you have a plan for Canada to meet its international commitments?

● (1555)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Currently, Canada spends 0.26% of its GDP on international development. When I held consultations, our partners asked for three things: good policy development, leadership and more money.

On policy, I feel that we are very satisfied with Canada's feminist international assistance policy. On leadership, we're providing it at different levels. We are doing a lot to safeguard the rights of women, girls, and, more specifically, adolescent girls. Canada was one of the first countries to respond to the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh. We presented a plan that is now triennial. We are ensuring leadership on this front as well.

We agree that official development assistance remains a crucial part of fulfilling the sustainable development goals. We committed to adding $2 billion over five years to carry out the priorities of the feminist international assistance policy, and to investing $1.5 billion for innovation initiatives in development.

In addition to that, we created the Canadian Development Finance Institution, or FinDev Canada, located in Montreal. The institution presented their first project recently. This money does not come from the official development assistance, but it still consists of Canadian funding that serves to lever private investments for development.

We also supported an initiative of the World Bank, called We-Fi, that encourages female entrepreneurship. Canada invested $20 million in this initiative that will seek out $1 billion. The first call for proposals has reached $1.6 billion.

We recognize that official development assistance is fundamental, but we're trying different ways of leveraging funds.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: At this rate, Minister, in which year will Canada fulfill its international commitments?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I can't give you an answer, I am sorry.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Okay, thank you.

Let's go back the Ukraine file.

A few months ago, I met with representatives of the Ukrainian communities. A number of ongoing projects came to term in January and February, 2018, which caused a lot of concern. I'm not necessarily asking you to give me an answer today, but would it be possible to let the committee know what new projects have been announced, or renewed, since September, 2017?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I cannot give you a detailed answer right now, but I will come back to you with one.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Could you send this information to the committee? We would appreciate it greatly.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Yes, it would be my pleasure.

However, I can tell you that we intend to maintain the same annual level of commitment as in previous years, that is, $50 million for humanitarian assistance, development, peace and security.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: What happened in June 2013, had a lot of people talking at the time. The government decided to merge CIDA, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada to create a new department. How has the organizational structure of the department changed since 2013? Are there specific examples of initiatives where trade, development and traditional diplomacy came into play together to create a new dynamic?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I did not experience the transition, but I have worked at CIDA in the past. When I came to the position, I'll admit that I was expecting to receive many requests to recreate CIDA, but this did not happen. I believe that the shock had subsided, and everyone was working together.

Here is one of the major benefits of this merger. Now, there are people responsible for development in all countries, not just in developing countries. That allows us to make our colleagues aware of a variety of issues. The geographic sectors of the department are closer to each other, and the people in trade, development and foreign affairs are increasingly interconnected. It is enriching. It allows us to better understand the region and to be more efficient.

My colleagues experienced it, and may want to add something. Personally, I would say that it's going well.

● (1600)

Ms. Diane Jacovella (Deputy Minister, International Development, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Good afternoon.

There is a minister responsible for each division: trade, foreign affairs, and development. It's the same thing for us deputy ministers. At the next level down, all of the managers in the department try to take the various challenges into account when giving their recommendations, but we have nonetheless maintained expertise in trade, development and foreign affairs, so that our projects continue to yield good results.

Let me give you an example. In trade, Canadian companies say that it's very important to have a favourable environment, in order to ensure that the rule of law applies and that the rules are followed. We do the same thing with development, by making sure that the countries have systems of governance.

It's often easy for us to work together to see what's keeping us from investing in countries. If the countries in Africa would get more investments, they would experience greater economic growth.

We care about inclusive economic growth, and we work very closely with our colleagues to achieve it. Given what's going on in South Sudan, for instance, it's impossible to talk about development without talking about peace and safety. We are trying to harmonize our messages, whether they are about politics or development, in order to make sure we're going in the right direction.

We need to make sure that the expertise of the officials at CIDA is still excellent within the new department.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Laverdière.

[*English*]

Madam Vandenbeld, please.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much, Minister.

My question is specifically about the estimates.

I noticed that in the estimates there is no specifically designated line item for international election observation. I know there are one-off projects. We can do it through embassies, through international assistance, through the peace and stabilization operations program, and yesterday the minister was very clear that we are planning on funding the Ukraine and other elections.

However, there used to be a program called the multilateral elections observation program, MEOP, under the old CIDA. When it was amalgamated, when Mr. Baird was the minister of foreign affairs, he actually cancelled that program and created a section under the stabilization and reconstruction task force, but there was no money and no human resources. At that point, there was no money specifically set aside, and there hasn't been since.

We changed it in 2016 to the peace and stabilization operations program, PSOP, but since it wasn't really a fit, it actually isn't there anymore, which means it's a bit orphaned.

It really is a development type of thing. We also know that in terms of outcomes for women and girls, if there is full political participation, free and fair elections, it is a precondition to the sustainable development goals. It's a way of ensuring that we have democracy and free elections so that we do increase marginalized groups' outcomes.

Would you be willing, especially with the increase in our feminist international assistance envelope, to use some of that funding to re-establish a program that's specifically designated, with the expertise, the in-house knowledge, and the coordination? Election observation isn't something you can just do. You do have to have that type of expertise in-house. Would you be willing to reconsider re-creating some type of program similar to the original MEOP?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I agree it's something very important, and it definitely fits very well under our area of expertise, which is good and inclusive governance. I look at it more that in addition to the feminist policy, which I started talking about before, we are looking at the Canadian vision of our intervention in each of the countries we are in. It's more during this exercise that we are considering if, in one country or another, Canada is well positioned to play a more active role during elections. Obviously Ukraine, and I would say Haiti as well, are two big examples of where we are actively involved when there are elections.

This is not something that was raised as a priority during the consultation, and it's not as loud as other things, but we recognize the benefit and it's definitely eligible. I'm not at the point of creating something especially for election monitoring, but depending on the country it's definitely an area of interest.

● (1605)

The Chair: Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for taking the time out of your busy schedule. If I remember rightly, you came in front of the committee last September to talk about the development finance institution. What I understood at that time was that the main goals of the DFI were economic development through job creation, economic empowerment for women, and climate change mitigation.

We know that Canada and its feminist international assistance policy have been very well received in terms of progressive development. Can you inform the committee how the DFI is progressing, making positive changes in economic growth and in combatting poverty?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: We're still in the early stages, but FinDev has been created. It's up and running in Montreal. The CEO has been hired, as well as the closest team around Mr. Lamontagne.

We financed the first project earlier this year, which is M-KOPA. I'll say the exact name of the project. It's a Kenyan pay-as-you-go energy provider to off-grid homes that connects more than half a million households on solar energy. It's really a project that meets two of our top priorities, one being contributing to women's economic empowerment, and the other being considering climate change and new, green technologies. This is the first one we have supported through the DFI. It's an investment of $10 million.

It's also worth noting that this company employs 800 people in Kenya, 52% of whom are women, in addition to the benefits that will be brought to the community that will get solar energy through the project.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I really like that project, by the way.

Mr. Saini, you're on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Good afternoon, Minister.

The major crisis in Myanmar is a global tragedy that requires a concerted and urgent international response. Crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing have forced 717,000 Rohingya to leave their homes, in the state of Rakhine, Myanmar, and flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. The situation is only getting worse, as even more Rohingya cross the border into Bangladesh each day.

Could you explain Canada's new strategy to protect the Rohingya?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Thank you for making the effort to ask your question in French.

Canada was one of the first countries to respond, last August and September. Thanks to the matching fund, the contribution now amounts to $46 million, on top of the $12 million that Canadians donated to the matching fund.

As you know, we recently announced a three-year plan. The first time we did this was for Syria. So, we are doing this a second time, to respond to the Rohingya crisis, because providing our partners with potential work, over a few years, is good development policy.

It amounts to $300 million over three years. Of course, a large part of this money will go to humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya community in Bangladesh, but also for the host community.

I was there. I visited Cox's Bazar. I met Rohingya women and I talked with them face to face.

It is a critical situation. There is a lot of violence. Even in the refugee camps, life is still extremely hard. The refugee camps are overcrowded. There are also dangers related to potential heavy rainfall and mudslides. The situation is extremely serious.

As I was saying, we need to provide basic care and meet the basic needs of the people in Cox's Bazar, among others, but also of the Rohingya communities still in Myanmar, and of the host community.

There is another aspect related to rendering justice and providing assistance with the fact-finding mission. The fact-finding mission is paramount if we want to respond to the recommendations of the reports written by Kofi Annan and Bob Rae for the return of the Rohingya.

There is a whole aspect on justice. Those responsible must be brought to justice so that people feel that justice has been served. Contributing to these missions is a key aspect of our support.

Then, there is the whole issue of international cooperation. I'm happy to tell you that we had this discussion last week, during the meeting of the G7 finance and development ministers. We agreed that we will use this crisis to work together and implement our commitment to an approach that is more focused on sex-specific development, that is more gender-aware, on gender equality and on empowering women in humanitarian contexts.

Beyond providing funding for shelters, water, food and basic needs, we really need to pay particular attention to the needs of women, adolescent girls and girls. We cannot only see them as victims or recipients. We must also find find ways to work with them, consult them and let them participate in the decisions. We need to help them develop skills and leadership, so that they can contribute to living in this community and gain new skills before going back to their regular lives.

● (1610)

[*English*]

The Chair: We have time for a short question from Mr. Levitt.

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Okay.

Welcome, Minister.

I'd like to ask you about a disturbing issue we have heard about regarding humanitarian employees abusing their authority. This is a difficult issue, but it is one that is important to discuss. I'm referring to reports and allegations concerning employees of Oxfam GB, but other allegations show that this is, sadly, not an incident isolated to a single NGO or a single place.

While I firmly believe that the vast majority of humanitarian workers do their jobs in very difficult environments and often under dangerous circumstances with the utmost integrity, these stories tarnish their work and the confidence of the public in these humanitarian groups.

Can you describe what the government has done to ensure that safeguards are in place to make sure this is not happening with Canadian humanitarian organizations?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Thanks for recognizing that most of the humanitarian and development workers are there for a good reason, and are really dedicated, putting their health and even life at risk sometimes.

When this event came back into the media—it was something that happened in 2011—I immediately reached out to Oxfam-Québec's and Oxfam Canada's CEO to investigate and see what the situation was, if we were involved. They knew about this fact, and they had already taken significant measures to improve their procedures to prevent, to train, and to act in such cases. I was reassured to start with. The same week I called for a meeting with 10 or 12 of our main Canadian humanitarian organizations to have this discussion, to share best practices, to identify the gaps, so we can close these gaps. We are working on these gaps with them, with the department, to see how we can share these best practices and identify the gaps.

The other step will also be to make sure the small and medium organizations also have the resources to undertake such preventive action, have these procedures, have a line where someone can call in a safe way, how to support the person who called, and how to prosecute the one who's facing allegations.

I was reassured that we were already in a good position, but we can always do better. I'm not blind. I think in every industry we have people who behave inappropriately, but we are in a situation where we deal with the poorest and the most vulnerable, so we have to be even stronger. We also had this conversation at the G7 again, and we agreed to share practices to support the UN secretary-general, because we all share the zero-tolerance approach.

One thing that is a bit difficult is to find how we will avoid having one predator being hired by another. We cannot work with a blacklist because of our privacy law, so we are thinking about other mechanisms, such as a humanitarian passport. We want to work together internationally because humanitarian and development workers work for one another. We are all working very hard, especially the U.K. and us, Canada. We're taking the lead on this situation because we don't want this to happen.

● (1615)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Aboultaif, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague Mr. Genuis.

Minister, it is no secret that we have had a flood of illegal border crossers over the last year-plus. As the Minister of International Development, what direct intervention did you have with your counterparts from the countries of origin of these queue jumpers to help create solutions at the source?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: They are not queue jumpers because they do not process through the same mechanisms. The Minister of Immigration, my colleague, went to Nigeria recently, to give you one specific example, because the last influx of asylum seekers came from Nigeria. I understand he's having very productive meetings in Nigeria and in the United States to face the situation. However, I believe this question is really for my colleague the Minister of Immigration.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: There's the development side and the humanitarian side. Have you been involved at all in the overall picture of this whole discussion?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I'm not involved as the Minister of International Development.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Do you have any involvement?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Are you talking about the asylum seekers coming to Canada? I may not have got your question right.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: I'm talking about the illegal border crossers who have been coming to Canada lately. I'm sure you're working on the side with your counterparts in the country of origin of these border crossers. Have you had any role in that or was it just the role of the Minister of Immigration?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: No, it's the Minister of Immigration who had direct conversations on this subject.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you.

First of all, Minister, I just have a comment. I think you know that Rona Ambrose in particular, but other members of the previous government, were very actively engaged in the promotion of women's rights around the world. It was minister Ambrose's initiative, our former leader—not at the time but later—who championed the creation of the International Day of the Girl Child. She was very vocal on issues like early and enforced marriages, and supported economic opportunities for women. I appreciate that much of this work is a positive example of continuity over the course of governments. I think it serves all of us better when people don't try to turn that into a partisan issue. I think we do have a consensus when it comes to advocating for women's rights around the world. I'm proud of the fact that it's part of a legacy that all of us are involved in. Certainly, I know you wouldn't want to diminish the good work on these issues by people like Rona Ambrose.

I want to ask you a question about UNRWA. I had an opportunity recently to visit an UNRWA school in the Palestinian territories in the West Bank. I was there as part of the Canada-Palestine Parliamentary Friendship Group. I know that the previous government had concerns about some of the things that were happening through UNRWA. Your government has taken a very different approach with respect to UNRWA.

What struck me in visiting this school was that it is geographically extremely close to an Israeli settlement. We asked the students there if there is any contact that takes place among the students at that school and children, students who are close by. They told us no, they didn't have that contact. They didn't want to have that contact. The teachers were nodding along approvingly while these comments were being made. I don't fault the children for the feelings they're having in this situation. Obviously, it's a very tense situation, but people want to know, in terms of curriculum, in terms of programs that encourage peaceful coexistence and pluralism, whether the messages people are getting, and schools that are funded by Canadians, are encouraging intercommunal harmony, peaceful coexistence, goodwill towards each other, or whether those students are getting messages through their school that are maintaining or even enhancing those tensions.

I wonder if you could comment on that, with respect to UNRWA. What steps has the government taken to ensure that Canadian tax dollars are actually being spent in a way that is fully aligned with Canadian values?

● (1620)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Thank you for the question.

I think we all recognize that UNRWA is working in a particularly difficult environment. I understand your concern and we share your concern. We are in very close communication with UNRWA on its direction. It's at least on a weekly basis, if not even more, because we really want to follow up, especially on the school curriculum because we know it's an issue in this particular environment.

We have to remember as well that when we support UNRWA, yes, a part of it goes to education, health, and basic services. It's not only in Palestine; it's also in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. As I said in the beginning, my mandate is to focus on the poorest and the most vulnerable. Definitely the Palestinian refugees are among those.

Yes, I'm following up. I'm very attentive to the matter.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

We'll turn to Madam Vandenbeld, please, for the last questions.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Minister, in following up on the theme of my previous question with regard to democratic development, as we mentioned, we know that women thrive and the sustainable development goals are achieved when you have open, pluralistic, inclusive democratic processes. A lot of the expertise that Canadians have, which we are particularly good at doing, is in institutional development—parliaments, rule of law, making sure we have strong democratic institutions around the world. In my past that was one thing I was doing abroad

The all-party democracy caucus recently had a forum where we brought in experts, former UNDP people from around the world who work in this field, the Parliamentary Centre and others, who said that at the moment only 2% of ODA goes to institutional development for democracy. I don't know if this is true.

I'm wondering if that's something we might be able to consider.

We know that the feminist international assistance policy doesn't mean that we stop doing things like democracy promotion and electoral observation. It just means that we want to have more women participating, and included in and designing those kinds of programs. The programs themselves actually achieve the kinds of outcomes for women and girls that we're looking for.

I'm not asking for an answer right now in terms of the percentage, but just in general, in terms of the inclusive governance that you're doing, would you be willing to take a look at the percentage? That's not for civil society participation, but specifically for institutional development on democracy.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Yes, I'll take a look, and I'll get back to you. I think my answer will be similar to the previous one. The area of priority, which is inclusive governance, is very well aligned.

Actually, when I was doing this consultation, I travelled quite a bit, and every time I met with one of my counterparts in the developing countries, I would mention that they've been working with Canadians for 50 years, and I would ask them what they thought we were good at, and how we could have a bigger impact in the field. The first thing they would cite was technical assistance. They really appreciate having Canadians around for that type of assistance.

● (1625)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: I know that a lot of Canadians are working for American organizations, for instance, NDI, IRI, or with international or intergovernmental organizations. UNDP has a strong parliamentary development section. The OSCE has Canadians on staff as well. Everywhere we go, Canadians are in senior positions when it comes to institutional capacity and technical development.

Canada doesn't have the National Endowment for Democracy, the NDI, or an organization specifically like them. I know 10 years ago this committee did a study on that. I have a motion before the committee to renew that study.

I'm wondering if I can get your thoughts on whether or not there's room for Canada to look at the way we do democracy promotion around the world. Maybe there is a way that Canadians could be working for a Canadian organization with our own values as opposed to.... It's good that we're working in organizations around the world, or U.S. organizations, but is there perhaps some space for...? The Parliamentary Centre and others are already doing this, I know. What are your thoughts about that?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: My thoughts are that this is once again related to the way Canada is working in different countries. In some countries it could be very interesting. As for creating something new, I'll be honest with you that this is not something we have really pushed. It has been identified as an area of priority, but as to creating something new, I'm not at that place right now.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Perhaps the committee will study it, and then we can give you some recommendations.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: If you identify it as a priority, I will definitely consider it even further.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you, Minister, I appreciate that.

The Chair: Mr. Aboultaif.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Minister, peace and security is one of the areas that the Canadian government has identified under the international development assistance program. We have a situation in China. China's being increasingly belligerent to its neighbours.

How much aid have we allocated for places like Taiwan or Vietnam, within the development in the South China Sea? Is there anything you've allocated to help these countries push back against China's militarization and action in the area?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: The only thing we have in China is —and correct me if I'm wrong—the CFLI. It's a little fund managed by the embassy to support local initiatives. I don't have the amount in front of me....Actually, yes I do.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: It's small.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: The local initiative funds are a small amount of money for local initiatives. When you're talking about Vietnam, we do have a development program in Vietnam, but I don't believe it meets the criteria you mentioned.

The Chair: Folks, that wraps up our hour with the minister. I want to thank her very much for her presentation and the questions on the estimates. It's very much appreciated.

We'll take a small break, and then we'll go to the officials.

● (Pause)

● (1630)

The Chair: Colleagues, I'll bring this meeting back to order.

We'll now go to the officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. I understand we have Shirley Carruthers, and Arun is back in his regular spot.

Colleagues, we have about 40 minutes and then we're going to need some time for a number of motions I need to put to you. I also understand that Mr. Aboultaif has a motion he'd like to present at some point in that discussion. Let's roll it along, so we will go straight to questions. Mr. Aboultaif will lead off.

Ziad, the floor is yours.

● (1635)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Is that on the motion?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Is it for questions?

The Chair: Exactly.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: I can do that.

Thank you very much again. You were here already for the first hour.

The question is around the AIIB. Canada has decided to participate in the AIIB. We have learned that the AIIB is funding projects such as coal-fired power plants. That's something that's basically against the advocation of the government right now on climate change and green energy policy. How much do you know about the investment that the AIIB is making? Do you agree that we shouldn't be protesting at least over what they don't understand? How are we going to deal with such a thing?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: My involvement with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is very, very limited. At the time of the announcement and the set-up, we were to ensure that the budget announcement and the paid-in capital of about $199 million U.S. was paid.

Unfortunately, I don't have any information on the project pipeline in terms of what they have approved, in terms of the type of investments they've approved to date or funded. I have very high-level figures on the total amount of loans or contributions they've made, but I don't have specific information.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Has the $199 million U.S. already been paid?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: That's over five years.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Over five years—but I thought the commitment was larger than that.

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: It is.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: What about the rest? What about the balance?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: The commitment was larger. Shares become available at certain times. I can't remember the amount offhand, but $199 million of shares were authorized, which we have purchased at this point.

We have authorization to purchase more, and that's what Canada is committed to doing, but at this point the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has made available to Canada only $199 million U.S.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: So their future plans are what they've given us already, just this amount of money that we can put forward. They didn't ask for more or they didn't expect more or they're not allowing more. What exactly is the situation?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I don't have the details on that.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: In order to know, there's a mechanism in place. I think this is a concerning area, among others. What's the action plan, when it comes to the ministry, in this whole dynamic, to at least obtain and explain what's going on from that end, given the fact that we have given $199 million U.S., which is about a quarter of a billion dollars Canadian already?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I'd have to get back to you on the role that we as a department play in terms of the oversight on those investments.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: The whole reason for my question is that now there is a carbon tax on Canadians. Canadians have to pay a carbon tax just to help reduce emissions and implement the climate change policy, and here we are sending $199 million U.S. into AIIB, which is doing a project that is clearly against that policy. It goes against what we are currently doing. In your opinion as an official, is this fair to Canadians?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I can tell you what I do know about what the infrastructure plan is for. The plan was looking at green and cross-border infrastructure, transport, energy, and other such projects.

Other than that I can't comment further on whether those investments are good. All I can do is tell you, from the information that I have, what the intention of the fund is and the level of Canada's investment.

● (1640)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: In your ministry, who is responsible just to monitor what's happening specifically on this file?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I would have to get back to you on who the precise official is, who is responsible.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Yes, it would be nice.

Shirley, would you like to comment on this at all? No, you wouldn't.

Okay, I'll move on to another question. We know that, again, $2.6 billion were committed to climate finance over the coming years for developing nations to transition into greener economies. On the other side, the government just purchased a pipeline for $4.5 billion.

Is this in practice an area where the government would go and repeat this in areas where we committed $2.65 billion to fix climate situations and to help climate issues to improve?

Do you see any difference in that? Are we to repeat this overseas, since we've done it here, out of the $2.65 billion?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I didn't get your question, sorry.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: My question is this. We have committed $2.65 billion for climate financing to other countries, to assist with climate change. Then, here we are; the government purchases a pipeline for $4.5 billion. Is this type of policy going to repeat elsewhere?

I mean, if there's a country that we're supposed to assist for greener energy and there's a plan to go on a similar project to the one we're doing here, would you support that? Do you think that one area can be tackled?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: For the $2.65 billion, the type of financing that we provide through that is very specific. It's for climate mitigation or adaptation projects, for example, clean technology, climate smart agriculture projects, forestry. The nature of what is contemplated to be funded through those and through our partners is pre-defined by that policy.

It's hard for me to comment beyond what the policy allows or contemplates for funding, through that funding window or policy.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: How much, though?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Aboultaif.

I appreciate your line of questioning, but I don't think these public servants can give you the answer vis-à-vis the domestic policy on the pipeline. I appreciate your question, nonetheless.

Madam Vandenbeld, please.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you very much.

To follow the question I asked the minister, when the amalgamation happened between CIDA and what's now Global Affairs, it seems that some of the programs got lost.

For instance, the MEOP on electoral observation had been funded between 2008 and 2013. It was funded with about $28 million, specifically for that program. Then it moved over in 2013, and under the previous government and then minister Baird, it lost all its funding. It still sat somewhere.

Are there other examples of programs that, when things were amalgamated, didn't really fit in one area or another and perhaps ended up orphaned, the same way that electoral observation did?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I'm trying to think of any examples. None of them really come to mind.

At the time of amalgamation, what essentially happened is that two departments were stitched together. There were certain programs, for example, electoral observations, that might have fallen in the peace and security area. However, the development programs that were very clearly development, stayed intact.

What was done, in terms of how we managed our finances, was we created a special fund for anything that was tagged against development. We can monitor and track development expenditures to ensure they continue to be used for international development purposes, that they continue to be counted as official development assistance.

There were internal financial structures to ensure not only the grants and contributions but the FTEs, so that the same amounts of operating expenditures were maintained for that purpose.

● (1645)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Speaking of the grants and contributions and the FTEs, one thing I'm hearing from civil society is that over the years, not recently but over the last decade, more and more it's not contribution agreements but it's moving more towards contracts and short-term one-offs. The length of time for project proposals to be approved is increasing. Of course, these are the types of things that are very difficult for Canadian organizations. Often their staff is funded through the different projects. Very few of them have core funding.

I'll go back to democratic development. Very often you don't know what's going to happen in a country. You might plan for electoral assistance but the election is delayed, or you might plan for a long-term parliamentary program and then the parliament is dissolved or something happens. Then, in certain areas, you need to go in quickly. Venezuela right now would be an example where there's a tremendous need very quickly. Sometimes it's less predictable even than that. There have been suggestions made of having more long-term agreements, say 10-year agreements, which would be very flexible, which would allow rapid response within certain parameters but allow these Canadian organizations....

That is another issue: a lot of our support should be going to organizations that are based in Canada and local partners.

Is there a way that we could move more towards providing that type of long-term, sustained support, particularly so organizations don't have staff hired, and then a gap of three or four months where they have to lay off the staff, and then bring the staff back because now they have another project? Is there a way to provide that longevity, both because it's good for NGOs but also because it's good for development assistance, for those partnerships, the local partnerships on the ground? Especially in politics and democracy, the political partnerships that are made are so vitally important. They're very easily lost if you withdraw from that country and then try to come back again. Thus, is there a move towards that?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: That was feedback the department received very clearly through the feminist international assistance policy consultation. It was very clear that our processes can be complex and cumbersome on partners. We also want to make sure that, yes, our processes are streamlined, but that we've done adequate due diligence at the same time. What we've been looking at over the last few months is whether there are ways of balancing both of those objectives, by lightening and streamlining the information that we request, and requesting it once. We're looking at the length of contribution agreements and how we amend them. We do know that in the types of contexts in which we work, things shift, costs shift, so can we do that in a more nimble fashion, but again assure that when there is a dollar allocated it does go to the intended recipient and that we have those due diligence measures in place? We are looking at those things very clearly.

We've had consultations with NGOs and the Canadian NGO community to do that. Over the summer we will start rolling out some of those changes.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: With regard to RBM, the results-based management framework, obviously this is a very important accountability mechanism all across government. However, when you're talking about development, it isn't necessarily always the most suitable accountability tool. Often, rather than showing that *x* amount of funding led to *x* result, you're not trying to achieve a result but prevent things from getting worse. It may be that the situation is here, it's about to go down to here, and you make sure it's gone here, as opposed to increasing and having a result to show for it.

How do you prove a negative? How do you prove that, without us, 40,000 more people would have starved but now only 5,000 starved? To put it very bluntly, it's very hard, in an RBM framework, when you're working on the ground in a country, on development particularly, to necessarily have all those indicators and outcomes nicely aligned ahead of time and within the timeframes.

In terms of an accountability mechanism, I agree, absolutely, we need to be accountable for the money, but is there a way to find something that in the field of development might be a little more flexible?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: We were talking earlier about some of the performance indicators, and underpinning that is an enormous results framework. We do have experts in results-based management at the project level. That all rolls up into the indicators that we publish in the departmental results report.

Those indicators are consulted with the project officers, with the NGO, and whether it is something that doesn't get worse or whether it's an aspirational type of goal, those all get built in. However, again, we're looking very clearly at how we track those results and make them meaningful in terms of our reporting and ensure that we deliver value through our development dollars.

● (1650)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: In terms of our bilateral assistance to UN agencies, such as UNDP, UN Women, and other agencies, there are different ways we can do that. One way is to basket funds. For instance, with a number of countries, UNDP will say, "We need this", and then a number of countries will put in a certain amount of money and we contribute to that. I actually think that is an effective way for the UN to manage the funds. There's also direct bilateral assistance, and of course, the core funding that goes to some of these agencies is vital to them.

I know UNDP has lost about 50% of its core funding. Having countries pick particular programs is, of course, what we like, because it gives us more flexibility to say, "We really like this particular gender program, and this one." Where are we in terms of how we're providing that assistance?

The Chair: I'll have to cut you off. I apologize.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Could they answer?

The Chair: We're way over time, so I'm going to Madame Laverdière.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much.

I would like to return to an issue Ms. Vandenbeld touched on, something called results-based management, or RBM. I tend to agree with her on this subject. We were wondering how we evaluated, in terms of RBM, the fact that many international partners were successful in avoiding civil wars. I know that many people are questioning these kinds of procedures that are sometimes quite complicated, and that risk, as I like to say,

[*English*]

to confuse accountability and accountancy, which are two different things, basically.

[*Translation*]

This particularly impacts the small organizations set up in northern Saskatchewan, which are often associated with one religious group or another.

Are you considering special mechanisms for these small organizations?

[*English*]

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Over the last couple of years, we've tried to diversify the number of partners that we work with, especially with some of the smaller Canadian organizations, the ones in Saskatchewan and all over Canada that you're talking about.

We've tried to do two things. One is, you refer to it as a contract, but it's how we do the engagement with them in terms of the agreement. One of the things we do is that before they execute a project, we will often visit them in person to look at and say, "Here's how we expect money to be managed. Here's the results reporting that we're looking for."

The results reporting is again customized to the initiative and to the deliverable. What we don't want to do is overburden a fledgling organization that may be just starting. Results are at the core of what we do, but we try to accommodate the partner when we establish those results.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Even for the funding requests, I remember that there was a competition at one point, and that the guide showing people how to fill out the application for funding was 46 pages long. We can imagine, in such a case, that it was very hard for the small organizations.

Were there changes in that regard?

I also heard of an idea to give each province and territory its own international development council, so that each of them could serve their community.

Was this idea considered? I'm not saying that it would be the thing to do, but I know that the idea was going around.

[*English*]

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I'll bet you that 46-page document was written by me. No, it wasn't.

As I said before, what we want to do is make sure that we enable organizations of all sizes to deliver on development projects and work with the department, but that we don't overburden them unnecessarily.

We are looking at how we can streamline our requirements. How do we write them in plain language? How do we look at the contribution agreements that we have with them and use standard contribution templates as much as possible so they're easy to follow? It's doing capacity building and initial visits with these organizations, so they understand our expectations, and when they fill in a report, either on results or for a quarterly financial report, they're able to do that.

With respect to provincial councils, I'm probably not the best person...that would be one of my colleagues who's not here. We are working more with, and targeting, provincial councils to look at their members, and to see how we can make our processes a bit simpler and more easy to use so they can access and even work through some of those councils.

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: I would like to briefly return to something Ms. Vandenbeld said. We don't allocate core funding to these organizations very often, but we ask them to carry an administrative burden that can be quite heavy. I'm exaggerating the situation a bit by saying they get nothing for administrative costs and they are provided with no core funding, but that we are still asking them for a detailed follow-up. For many organizations, that's a problem.

What do these people do when they are between two projects? They fire their staff, and are then forced to find new people. Then, there is the learning curve issue.

Is the Government of Canada reviewing the policy of not giving core funding to organizations?

[*English*]

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: As a result of the policy, I think what we're looking at is how we engage effectively with Canadian organizations. How do we make it easier for them to interact with us as an organization? How do we simplify working with them? We do the fiduciary element; that's the part that I know best. I know that sometimes we impose a burden in costs on organizations when we can achieve the same outcome by allowing things to be done through web portals or by being more standardized.

We're trying to work with organizations in terms of how we fund them, and also in terms of the eligible costs we fund, and to do so in a manner that's much simpler so that we don't impose on Canadian organizations the kind of burden that we have imposed in the past.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: There's still no consideration of giving core funding to some...?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Not that I'm aware of, no.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Laverdière.

Once again, Mr. Saini, please.

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you very much for being here this afternoon.

I want to ask a question about something that I read in your departmental plan. If you look at priority number two, advancing Canada's feminist policy, you can see that it dovetails nicely into sustainable development goal number five, but one of the main points you have there is that 50% of bilateral assistance in 2020-21 will be going to sub-Saharan Africa, because you're tailoring the funding to the poorest.

When we look at sub-Saharan Africa, we see a lot of other players: other countries, other NGOs, and other CSOs. You see la Francophonie, the UN, the IMF, and the World Bank. There are a lot of entities working there, so my question is a bit broad in response to that.

If we're going to apply our efforts in that part of the world, how are we going to discriminate? Where Canadian funding is going to be applied, how are we going to make sure that Canadian programming is going to be applied? How are you going to discern which partners to work with, which ones not to work with, which countries to go into, which countries don't need the help, and which countries need the help? How will you figure out those parameters and come up with some road map going forward, since 50% of the funding will be in that part of the world?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Let me start by talking about partners. Internally, we have a vetting process for any partner we work with. We vet them in terms of their capacity. In order to know if they can actually deliver on the project that we're potentially going to fund, we do a rigorous due diligence process in terms of their financial capacity and technical expertise. Do they have experience in-country, for example, if it's a fragile environment?

Any partner we work with goes through a rigorous analysis to ensure they can actually deliver on what it is that's being proposed. Also, in any country we work in, we do a lot of coordination with other donors so that we don't trip all over each other. Every donor has their own priority areas, and we have ours, as was clearly outlined by the minister, so what we do is ensure that we allocate our development dollars where we can make the greatest impact.

We look at where others are active and at where we can either support or be complementary, or where our partners have expertise, whether that be in education, sexual health and reproductive rights, or whatever the area is; so first it's the partner, and then it's where we can make the greatest difference. In terms of the countries, a number of indices and factors influence the decision on where we work. Again, it's about where can we make the greatest difference and where the needs are greatest. There are all sorts of indices about vulnerability, and about poverty indices and all those things. All those are factors in terms of the countries in which we work.

● (1700)

Mr. Raj Saini: How much time do I have left? I want to split it with Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

The Chair: Well, it is Mr. Wrzesnewskyj's turn.

Mr. Raj Saini: Okay.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you. I have a quick couple of questions.

How many election-monitoring projects have we had in the last two years?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Unfortunately, I don't have that information.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Could that be provided to us, as well as the costs associated with those projects?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Yes.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Do you have an approximate idea of what the costs would have been?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I unfortunately don't have a breakdown by —

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Could we get those as a percentage of the overall CIDA budget?

I'd like to come back to a previous question that referenced NDI and IRI. We spend billions upon billions on development aid and humanitarian aid, quite rightly and correctly, yet it seems we spend a very small fraction on the institution building that's required or on building the institutions of democracy. That speaks to addressing the root causes of conflict as opposed to dealing with the results.

There used to be a structure called Canada Corps, which was put in place back in 2005. I think it lasted until about 2006.

Were there any assessments done on the effectiveness of the work of Canada Corps, which engaged quite directly in institution building and things such as election monitoring?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I would have to come back to you on that. I don't have any information on whether there's been an evaluation of Canada Corps, but I can come back to you.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Sure.

Finally, I'm still having a hard time understanding. What is the funding that's been earmarked, or has any funding been earmarked for election monitoring in the coming year?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Again, I don't have that information.

One of the priority areas is inclusive governance, and so I could roughly—

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Okay, I see—

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: It would be—

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: More specifically, it would be appreciated if you could provide the committee with answers to those questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Vandenbeld, please.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Going back to my previous line of questioning about some of the Canadian organizations, the NGOs, we know that a lot of the staff of those organizations, people who are working in the field of humanitarian assistance, are women.

One of the things I've been told by some of the women working in places like Care Canada and elsewhere, is that under the contribution agreements or the contracts they have with Global Affairs, the employer is not allowed to fund any top-ups on parental leave. Many of these people have been working for 10 years or more. They're long-term employees, but because of the nature of the agreement they have with the Government of Canada, they're not allowed to have the same kind of top-ups that other employers might wish to provide. It's actually precluded.

Can you tell me, first of all, is that true? If it is true, is there any interest in reviewing that?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: That issue came up, I think, last year.

I can't remember the organization that raised it with us, but we are reviewing our policy on that.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you very much for that.

The other thing I wanted to say was that in 2010, I was managing a global project for women, for women in politics. I had staff on five continents.

My regional coordinator for sub-Saharan Africa Skyped me one day and said, "You Canadian women are hypocrites." I stood back and asked, "What do you mean?" She said, "I studied at McGill and I know that Canadian women have reproductive rights, but it's not good enough for us African women."

She pointed out a clinic in her hometown. It had been Canadian-funded for 40 years. It was providing needed medical services in a conflict-affected area. It provided sexual and reproductive health support for young girls, 14-year-old girls, who'd been gang-raped by militias. Because one of the things that the clinic offered was abortion services, their funding was actually cut by the Harper government. As a result, that clinic—with almost no notification and after 40 years of working with Canada—lost all of their health services.

What I'd like to ask—because we are very clear that we support women's reproductive health and choice—is how are we rebuilding those broken relationships? How do you go into a village where the doctors and nurses lost their jobs, the clinic shut down...how do you go back in there and open that clinic and ask them to trust us again? Is there a way we can restore and rebuild the trust that people, particularly women in developing countries, had in us?

● (1705)

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: With the announcement of the funding for sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as the broadening of the definition of maternal, newborn, and child health, our development officers overseas, the ones we have at headquarters and our partners have been very active in the communities and countries in which we work to rebuild that trust and to ensure that the full suite of that programming is available.

I was in Mozambique a couple of years ago, where those services were provided. The community was very accepting of that. I think it will take time, but the work has begun over the last couple of years.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: I think Minister Freeland's intervention yesterday will go a long way toward that.

The other thing I want to bring up is this issue of interference in elections and in democratic stability by using technology, often by nefarious actors, sometimes state-backed actors. Are we looking at how to make sure that, first of all, we have protections in terms of some of those organizations that might be based here in Canada? When we're looking at development work, how do we counter some of the destabilizing impacts of organizations that might even be criminally funded, that might be trying to destabilize? Human rights defenders and democracy defenders are being attacked online. There are journalists who.... The space for political dialogue is closing in many countries, and often it's not coming from that country; it's coming from outside, and it's being done through use of technology.

Are we looking at that when we look at our development assistance? Is there any thinking around that?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: The thinking around that is a little bit broader. In budget 2018 there was $16 million announced for cybersecurity. An element of that is international. What Global Affairs will be doing is looking at coordinating international cyber activities. There will be a dedicated unit to do that coordination internationally for us.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Genuis, please.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the officials.

I'll start on the issue of education. When Canada funds or supports education abroad, what is our process, in general? What's our process for engaging with the curricular content? All of us are in favour of education, supporting education. Also, there's a reality that sometimes messages that encourage division and demonization of minorities actually happen in the context of schools and education infrastructure. What's your process for trying to make sure Canadian dollars aren't connected to that? Does your department have any involvement in the direct creation of curriculum, writing curriculum, and offering curricular tools to schools around the world?

● (1710)

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: To the best of my knowledge, we don't have any involvement in direct creation.

When we do education funding, we often work through large multilateral organizations, such as the Global Partnership for Education, where we are part of the governance and we have a say in how the organization implements projects, for example, in education. When we work with Canadian NGOs that are involved in education as well, as part of our due diligence we look at what type activities they're doing, to ensure that they are not indoctrination or something contrary to Canadian values. That would be as part of the upfront due diligence in projects.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Do you think a Canadian public servant would directly review the materials that are being used, textbooks and that sort of thing, or would you defer that review to other organizations and partners?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: That I would have to confirm, but in any project we do, our project officers are responsible, no matter what the subject area. Whether it's education, health, or environment, we have specialists. Before we fund, or before I will sign them off as a CFO, they have to go through that technical review to ensure that they will achieve the development outcomes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Right, so a technical review is one thing. I guess what I'm wondering is, to put it concretely, if there's a history textbook that's appearing in a public school in Pakistan and there are questions about how that history textbook integrates a discussion of the history of minority communities, and that history textbook has Canadian dollars in it, would Canadian officials be reviewing the content of that textbook, or would the review be at a step-back, higher, overarching type of level?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I would have to confirm that for you, but to use your example, if there's risk of that happening, it's unlikely that would be the type of education intervention we would fund. We may fund things other than textbooks, but we would look at those types of risks before making a funding decision.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Even if you're funding things other than textbooks, if you're funding classrooms where this content is being taught as well, the concern is still there. I understand there is some uncertainty, and fair enough. Perhaps this is an issue that you'd be open to following up on in writing to the committee. It's one that I actually hear about from time to time from diaspora communities in Canada that have specific concerns about curricular content that we're funding as part of development assistance and whether that's reflective of our values in every case.

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I know with certain partners, no matter what project, we do monitoring. Every project that we fund has a monitoring evaluation component. In flight of a project, we do the monitoring. We ensure that the activities that we're funding are the ones that we ought to be funding. I'd be more than pleased to follow up in writing.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Excellent.

I think I have about 50 seconds left.

What programs and how much money do you have in programs that fund Canadians to travel and volunteer abroad as part of a development assistance strategy?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: We do fund a volunteer program. We work with a number of organizations for that. I'll see if I have the numbers here with me, but that's something we could pull out for you if I don't have it on hand. I'd be more than happy to provide it to you.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Excellent. I'd be interested in that either now or at a later point.

The Chair: We're going to go to Mr. Poilievre, our special guest.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Thank you very much.

I have a question about the results-based approach you take. It's something I looked at a lot when I was employment minister. How is it we ensure that organizations that get results-based funding don't sign themselves up to deliver results that were going to happen anyway?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: We haven't used a results-based funding mechanism in the sense of a pay-for-results kind of framework. As part of new ways of approaching international development, I think that's something we're exploring. We do know that our American counterparts do that and we're trying to learn from them and from the British and others.

Any time we do make a development investment, we want to make sure that the results are additional. If the results were going to materialize, and that's part of the evaluation going into the funding of a project, they do actually have to move the needle forward or avoid a deterioration of results. There has to be some kind of incremental impact before funding is allocated.

● (1715)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Do you provide performance pay to NGOs at all?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: We do not.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: What is the reason for that?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: We have had very little experience doing that. Over the last year we've looked at new, innovative approaches, and results-based payment schedules is one of them. We haven't had many proponents who say, "Here's something that we could do results-based funding for." We have worked with your former department on some of the things they've done to learn from, where they've used either social impact bonds or other results-based mechanisms to see how that applies in the development context. We just haven't had the opportunity to implement that as of yet.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Thanks.

The Chair: Colleagues, that will wrap up our session with the officials.

Officials, I want to thank you very much. You don't have to run off, but you can.

We're going to do the votes now. Then we'll go to Mr. Aboultaif's notice of motion. Then we have one or two other things, but very shortly, depending on how it all goes.

As per how the estimates work, I will read it out for you.

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....$1,706,736,559

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....$135,243,378

Vote 10—The grants listed in any of the Estimates for the fiscal year..... $4,219,944,467

Vote 15—Payments made.....$50,779,000

Vote 20—Pursuant to subsection 12(2) of the International Development (Financial I Institutions) Assistance Act.....$1

Vote L25—Pursuant to subsection 12(2) of the International Development (Financial I Institutions) Assistance Act.....$1

(Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, and L25 agreed to on division)

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE

Vote 1—Payments to the Centre.....$139,338,189

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION (CANADIAN SECTION)

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....$11,267,974

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall I report the main estimates 2018-19 to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That was the hard part for today.

Now, I'd like to go to Mr. Aboultaif's notice of motion. He'd like to present it to committee with no debate, as it is a notice of motion. There will be no debate, as it relates to this, because I understand there's no unanimous consent to waive the notice of motion.

I'll turn the floor over to you.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you, Chair.

I believe a copy of the motion was distributed to all members.

The motion says:

That the committee:

(1) Recognize that there is an urgent need to bridge the humanitarian/development divide that prevents quality education services from being delivered to millions of out of school children in the most volatile regions in the world;

(2) Note that girls are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys in countries affected by crisis due to the persistence of gender inequality and the additional barriers that girls face in accessing quality education;

(3) Believes that Canada should include a focus on girls' education and empowerment as an important theme of the 2018 G7 Summit June 8-9 in Charlevoix, Quebec;

(4) Acknowledges the lasting, non-partisan commitment of the Government of Canada to improving access to education for women and girls throughout the developing world.

And that the committee report to the House the adoption of this motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Aboultaif.

After 48 hours, generally speaking, at the next meeting, we'll have an opportunity to move that motion, debate it, and then the committee will decide.

Thank you.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you.

The Chair: The next order of business is our motion on the Ukrainian delegation's hospitality.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Is that in camera?

The Chair: It's fine.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: We believe in transparency on the subject.

● (1720)

The Chair: The motion is that the clerk of the committee make the necessary arrangements for an informal breakfast meeting on Tuesday, May 12, 2018, with a delegation from Ukraine.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I suggest culturally appropriate food, like perogies, cabbage rolls, and that sort of thing.

The Chair: I've already made arrangements for that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Excellent. That's wonderful.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The last point is that the Auditor General is not available, which all members would be interested in. The decision has been taken that, since we won't be able to get the full report completed in the time that we have allotted, we'll move this to the fall, have a meeting with the AG, and then complete the report. I just wanted you to know that the days we tried to fit it into our already busy schedule just didn't work, so it will have to wait until the fall.

I wanted to inform you that we've attempted to have that work. Other than that, I think that's all there is for the business for today.

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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